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# How Scottish is the Scottish Psalter? William Mure of Rowallan, Zachary Boyd, and the Metrical Psalter of 1650

## **Cover Page Footnote**

Peter Auger, "How Scottish is the Scottish Psalter? William Mure of Rowallan, Zachary Boyd, and the Metrical Psalter of 1650," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 40 (2014): 55-75

**HOW SCOTTISH IS THE SCOTTISH PSALTER?  
WILLIAM MURE OF ROWALLAN, ZACHARY  
BOYD, AND THE METRICAL PSALTER OF 1650**

*Peter Auger*

The historic contribution of the Scottish Psalter of 1650 to Scottish life and literature is considerable and widely recognized. When the Church of Scotland's Psalmody Committee issued a new psalter, in 2003, reprinting the 1650 versions alongside the new ones, it noted:

Ever since it was issued in 1650 *The Scottish Psalter* has played a significant part in the worship of the Scottish church. Though the language of its metrical versions has become dated, many of its renderings remain much loved and used.<sup>1</sup>

According to Robert J. Dickie, the Scottish Psalter is "the one which has united all the Scottish churches, despite all the denominational divisions over the years."<sup>2</sup> Yet, however closely *The Psalms of David in Meeter* (1650) has been associated with psalm-singing in the Church of Scotland, its text is generally understood to be an Anglo-Scottish hybrid, owing its immediate origins to the Englishman Francis Rous's *Psalms of David* (1638) and to the revision completed for the Westminster Assembly (1647). The editors of the anthology *Scottish Religious Poetry* (2000) summarize this scholarly consensus when describing how the General

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I thank Exeter College, Oxford, for financial support and Timothy Duguid, Alexander Campbell and Nicholas Temperley for comments and conversation. I am especially grateful to Jamie Reid-Baxter for feedback on an earlier draft.

<sup>1</sup> *Sing Psalms: New Metrical Versions of the Book of Psalms with The Scottish Psalter (1650)* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 2003), 199.

<sup>2</sup> Robert J. Dickie, 'The History of the Scottish Metrical Psalter', 15 (<http://sing-the-psalms.webs.com/scottishpsalter.htm#800428159>, all web-links accessed in February 2014). See also *The Psalter: A Revised Edition of the Scottish Metrical Version of the Psalms with additional Psalm-Versions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Nichol Grieve, *The Scottish Metrical Psalter of 1650* (T. J. Clark: Edinburgh, 1940).

Assembly of the Church of Scotland “oversaw the adoption of psalm translations drawn up by the Westminster Assembly” to create a version which “often incorporated earlier work by Scottish poets,” and explaining that “these metrical psalms came to be associated with Scotland because of their widespread use throughout the country.”<sup>3</sup> William Mure of Rowallan and Zachary Boyd are the two poets whose paraphrases were recommended in the General Assembly’s instructions in 1647, and who are still held to have had the most direct influence on the revised paraphrase, and hence on making the Scottish Psalter Scottish.

This article argues that both poets did indeed provide a vital precedent for a new Scottish paraphrase, but that this significance did not necessarily entail substantial textual influence on the final text. Indeed, when reviewing historical documents relating to the revision process and the manuscript context of Mure’s psalter, we find very little evidence that Mure’s paraphrase was a source for the 1650 text. This re-assessment clarifies our understanding of how Mure, like Boyd, played a key role in asserting that a vigorous and uniquely Scottish tradition of psalmody thrived in the 1640s, and that a separate Scottish psalter was therefore needed.

Previous re-constructions of the origins of the Scottish Metrical Psalter have concentrated on locating genetic relationships with earlier Scottish psalters, particularly the 1564 Psalter and the King James Psalter (to which William Alexander contributed), as well as Mure’s and Boyd’s paraphrases. The standard reading of the Psalter’s composition is still heavily indebted to the painstaking unpublished research of the nineteenth-century Presbyterian minister William Peebles Rorison, whose findings became widely known through Millar Patrick’s *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* and are currently quoted in the relevant Wikipedia article.<sup>4</sup> In response to prevailing nineteenth-century opinion that the Psalter was fundamentally Rous’s text, Rorison analyzed the entire psalter line-by-line and specified how similar each line was to ten other

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<sup>3</sup> *Scottish Religious Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. by Meg Bateman, Robert Crawford and James McGonigal (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2000), 312. See also Robert Crawford, *Scotland’s Books* (London: Penguin, 2007), 204; Agnes Mure Mackenzie, *Scottish Literature to 1714* (London: A. Maclehose and Co., 1933), 204-5.

<sup>4</sup> Millar Patrick, *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949), 101-102; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scots\\_Metrical\\_Psalter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scots_Metrical_Psalter), citing <http://www.cgmusic.org/library/scottish.htm>.

early modern psalters.<sup>5</sup> Rorison studied all earlier Scottish psalters, as well as English versions by George Wither, Henry Dod and William Barton, and noted all relationships between the 1650 Psalter and earlier texts, often citing multiple correlations but ultimately attributing each line to a single source. The result was a magnificent 600-page document called *The Story of the Scottish Metrical Psalter*, which was presented to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland by Rorison's widow in 1910 after his death the previous year, and is still available for consultation in New College Library, University of Edinburgh. Here is the table of Rorison's attributions for the 8,620 lines of the 1650 Psalter:

Psalter	Lines	Percentage
1564 Scottish version	338	4%
Henry Dod (1620)	266	3%
King James (1631-6)	516	6%
George Wither (1632)	52	0.5%
Sir William Mure of Rowallan	49	0.5%
The Bay Psalm Book (1640)	269	3%
William Barton (1644)	136	2%
Zachary Boyd (1644-48)	754	9%
Francis Rous (1638-46)	878	10%
Westminster version (1647)	1,588	18%
Presumably original	3,774	44%

**Table I: Rorison's Line-by-Line Source Attributions**

Rorison's extremely detailed and lucid analysis was the source for subsequent readings which place a percentage figure on the Scottishness of the Scottish Psalter. Michael Spiller, for example, comments that "about one tenth of the 1650 *Psalter*" is Zachary Boyd's.<sup>6</sup> Boyd's 9% and Mure's 0.5% of lines balance out, as it were, the 10% attributed to Rous, though it is the 44% of "presumably original" lines that continues to make Rorison's defence of the Psalter's distance from its English predecessors persuasive.

<sup>5</sup> W. P. Rorison, "The Story of the Scottish Metrical Psalter" (New College Library, Edinburgh: unpublished, 1909).

<sup>6</sup> Michael Spiller, "Poetry after the Union 1603-1660," in *The History of Scottish Literature: Volume I. Origins to 1660*, ed. R. D. S. Jack (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), 141-62 (143).

However, this approach ignores the difficulty in recovering precise information about the composition process. Rorison's research is not just outdated for its reliance on subjective judgment, but because he stressed the authority of earlier sources, even when more recent texts, particularly the Westminster Version, are likely to have been closer to the revisers' hands. The key methodological problem is that Rorison analyzes lines individually rather than taking whole phrases or verses together: he often suggests that all four lines of a single verse originate from four different psalters, even where it is more intuitive to think that the revisers consulted one psalter only. Rorison consistently prioritizes the earliest occurrence of a line in order to trace transmission through to the 1650 Psalter; in his introduction, he builds up a picture of the psalter's composition by establishing all possible routes for mediation through which, for example, the old Scottish psalter could have found its way into the revised edition via mediating psalters.<sup>7</sup> His reading implies that at some point in the process ten separate psalters came to influence the text; as we shall see, however, it is more historically accurate to assume that the Westminster Version printed in 1647 was the one psalter from which the revisers were initially working, and therefore ought to be prioritized as a source.

Psalm 23 ("The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want") provides a concise illustration of these problems. In *Scotland's Books* (2007) Robert Crawford – following *Scottish Religious Poetry*, which in turn is surely reliant on Rorison's work – claims that Psalm 23 takes "its first line from a version by Zachary Boyd, while much of the rest draws on a 1639 translation by Sir William Mure of Rowallan."<sup>8</sup> This assertion is very difficult to uphold, despite strong corroboration from Rorison's analysis. For example, in Psalm 23:5 ("My table thou hast furnished | in presence of my foes" in the 1650 Psalter), Rorison records common ground between the second lines in Mure ("For me a table Thow dost spread | In presence of my foes"), the Bay Psalm Book ("For me a table thou hast spread | In presence of my foes") and the Westminster Version ("Before me thou a table fit'st | In presence of my foes"). It is rash to assume Mure's direct influence here simply because his use of the phrase "In presence of my foes" predates the Westminster Version; indeed the phrase also occurs in Sternhold and Hopkins (1562). The Westminster text remains the likelier immediate source – if in fact there was a single

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<sup>7</sup> Rorison, *Scottish Metrical Psalter*, 14-40.

<sup>8</sup> Crawford, *Scotland's Books*, 341.

source – when considered within surrounding lines and taking full account of the background to the revision, and the manuscript and print context in which these psalters survived and were circulated. Overall, if seeking to update Rorison's table of percentages, the Westminster text should be given more weight, probably by at least ten per cent.

This article therefore does not seek to quantify or recalculate the Metrical Psalter's Scottishness, but instead concentrates on allusions to William Mure's psalter and the manuscripts in which they survive, to show how Mure's literary activities inspired and justified the project to revise the Westminster Version within an established Scottish tradition. The first section reviews historical documents about the revisions authorized at both Westminster and Edinburgh, emphasizing references to Mure and Boyd, in order to recover evidence about the revisers' motivations, methods and source-texts.<sup>9</sup> This narrative confirms that the Scottish Psalter was meant to take the revisions to Rous's psalter further than the Westminster Version had, and so create a paraphrase more suitable for psalm-singing in a Scottish Presbyterian setting. The second section turns to surviving manuscript copies of Mure's psalter for evidence showing whether the team of revisers is likely to have consulted his paraphrase. This close reading contextualizes Rorison's work by taking into account which copies the revisers could have used; which strategies of imitation and patterns of borrowing are most prevalent; whether phrases echo through multiple versions without a clear point of origin, rather than having a single verifiable source; and how the revisers' methods were appropriate to the charged environment of the 1640s. The concluding section argues that both Mure's and Boyd's psalter held symbolic and practical importance in asserting that a native tradition of paraphrasing thrived in Scotland. The similarities recorded by Rorison demonstrate affinities in purpose and method between different Scottish psalters as each sought to create a new metrical paraphrase appropriate for Presbyterian congregations. These findings shed light on how the processes of adaptation and revision which created the Scottish Metrical Psalter were contingent on the immediate cultural environment within

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<sup>9</sup> See Rorison's bibliography on pages 12-13. Much of the documentary evidence is gathered in "Notices regarding the metrical versions of the psalms received by the Church of Scotland" in *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, A. M., Principal of the University of Glasgow*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle, 1841-42), III, 525-56 (cited below as "Baillie").



which they took place, an environment which was distinctively Scottish Presbyterian.

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The “travels” (i.e. “travails”) of William Mure of Rowallan and Zachary Boyd were explicitly named as sources which would assist the team responsible for revising the Scottish Psalter. At the afternoon session of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland held on 28 August 1647, an “Act for Revising the Paraphrase of the Psalmes brought from England, with a Recommendation for Translating the other Scripturall Songs in Meeter” was passed:

The Generall Assembly, having considered the report of the committee concerning the Paraphrase of the Psalmes sent from England, and finding that it is very necessary that the said paraphrase be yet revised; therefore, doth appoint Master John Adamson to examine the first fourty Psalmes, Master Thomas Craufurd the second fourty, Master John Row the third fourty, and Master John Nevey the last thirty Psalmes of that Paraphrase; and in their examination they shall not only observe what they think needs to be amended, but also to set downe their own essay for correcting thereof; and, for this purpose, recommends to them to make use of the travels of Rowallen, Master Zachary Boyd, or of any other on that subject, but especially of our own Paraphrase, that what they finde better in any of these works may be chosen; and, likewise, they shall make use of the animadversions sent from Presbyteries, who, for this cause, are hereby desired to hasten their observations unto them, and they are to make report of their labours herein to the Commission of the Assembly for Publike Affaires, against their first meeting in February next.<sup>10</sup>

The document goes on to state that the key criterion for the revision was that the text should match the common tunes then used, that is “having the first line of eight syllabs, and the second line of six.” The final text achieves this by having fewer unmetrical lines and polysyllabic words, and a less formal register than the Westminster Version (apparent especially in words derived from Anglo-Norman and old French, like “deceive” or “pensive”).

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<sup>10</sup> *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1638-1842* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Printing and Publishing, 1843), 159.

“The Paraphrase of the Psalmes sent from England” is the revised version of Francis Rous’s psalter, more commonly known as the Westminster Version, but still closely associated in England and Scotland with Rous, both at the time and in subsequent centuries. Rous’s psalter was first printed in Rotterdam in 1638 and accepted “for the general use” by the English parliament upon reprinting in 1643.<sup>11</sup> Shortly afterwards the Westminster Assembly commissioned a revised version of Rous’s psalter which was printed in February 1647.<sup>12</sup> A letter from London to Edinburgh upon the psalter’s publication exhorted the Church of Scotland to adopt the new paraphrase, stressing that “one Psalme-book in the three kingdomes will be a considerable part of Vniformity.”<sup>13</sup> The Westminster Assembly had already acted on its conviction that a shared psalter was crucial to securing ecclesiastical unity in England and Scotland in Autumn 1645 by rejecting the simultaneous use of William Barton’s psalter, despite its popularity among the Lords.<sup>14</sup> Scottish commissioners like Robert Baillie, who promoted the cause of uniformity, sought to ensure that Presbyterian needs were met in the Westminster text so that “ther [is] noe necessity of re[s]cinding from the common paraphrase ... That as much as may be, all the Psalmes may be of the common tune.”<sup>15</sup> Yet the General Assembly in Scotland was reluctant to accept the new

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<sup>11</sup> Francis Rous, *Psalmes of David in English Meeter* (London, 1643; Wing B2397), titlepage; Colin Burrow, “Rous, Francis (1580/81–1659),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24171>).

<sup>12</sup> *Psalmes of David in English Meeter* (London, 1646; Wing B2418); *The Records of the Commissions of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland holden in Edinburgh in the years 1646 and 1647*, ed. by Alexander F. Mitchell and James Christie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1892), 200 and 209–10. On the Westminster Revision, see *Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. by Chad van Dixhoorn, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), III, 664 and 672; IV, 68 and 74; and V, 259–62; “20 November 1643,” *Journal of the House of Commons* (1802), 3: 315; “14 November 1645” and “15 April 1646,” *ibid.*, 4: 342 and 509; “14 November 1645,” *Journal of the House of Lords* (1767–1830), 7: 704–5; and “18 April 1646,” *ibid.*, 8: 277 (*Journals* accessed online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>).

<sup>13</sup> *Records of the Commissions 1646–47*, 209–10.

<sup>14</sup> *Minutes and Papers*, III, 706–7; IV, 74; V, 303; “26 March 1646” and “25 April 1646,” *Journal of the House of Lords*, 8: 236 and 283–84.

<sup>15</sup> *Minutes and Papers*, I, 108 and 175; III, 353; David Stevenson, “Baillie, Robert (1602–1662),” in *ODNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1067>).

psalter, and bought time by asking for copies to be sent so that presbyteries could have their say.<sup>16</sup> The Act quoted above marked the Assembly's final refusal to adopt the Westminster psalter in Scotland, despite Baillie's plea as late as 6 August 1647 that the psalter had "cost the Assembly some considerable paines, and is like to be one necessar part of the three Kingdoms uniformitie."<sup>17</sup>

These "considerable paines" included Baillie's recent correspondence with William Mure of Rowallan. Although we should be alert to possible political shadowplay in statements made about revising the psalter, it nonetheless appears that Baillie went out of his way to have Mure involved in the Westminster revision process after he had seen and admired a draft copy of Mure's paraphrase. Writing from his parish at Kilwinning (ten miles from Rowallan) on 9 October 1643, Baillie told Mure that he expected a new psalter to be on the agenda at Westminster and that having been impressed with Mure's versions he wanted to take a copy with him:

Your's I did lyk better than any other I have sein. If you think meet to send to me a perfyte copy therof, I shall assur to make that use of it which you shall direct, or the best I am able.<sup>18</sup>

A letter subsequently written from London, dated 1 January 1644, confided to its addressee (probably David Dickson (minister at Irvine, also close to Rowallan) or Robert Ramsey) that "I wish I had Rowallen's Psalter here; for I like it much better than anie yet I have seen."<sup>19</sup> From this letter we can assume that Mure's psalter was not circulating at Westminster, yet this did not preclude his involvement: in a letter written to the Laird of Rowallan in about April 1645, Baillie again interceded to have Mure work on the new psalter: the letter mentions that the committee at Westminster had revised a hundred psalms "so perfyte as they have a mind to make them" but that their work might require more work from someone with the requisite time and talent, again emphasizing unity in the three kingdoms:

We know, Sir, that God hes given yow a great and singular abilitie in this kind, and accordingly hes put it in your heart to mind the Psalmes for many years, more than any man we know in

<sup>16</sup> *Records of the Commissions 1646-47*, 210, 222-23 and 237.

<sup>17</sup> Baillie, III, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Baillie, II, 101.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 121. K. D. Holfelder, "Dickson, David (c.1583-1662)," in *ODNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7614>). I thank Dr Reid-Baxter for pointing out the geographical proximity of Kilwinning, Irvine and Rowallan.

all our land. If yow might be pleased to bestow some pains upon the recognition of these hundred we have sent downe, and of the fifty which shortly will follow, your labour certainly would be spent on that which concerns very nearly the honour of God, the good of the Churches in all the three Kingdomes, both now and in the after ages also, which in some measure may be for the reputation and credit of our Nation and Church.<sup>20</sup>

Baillie also reports that he has asked for copies to be drawn up and sent to Mure, and that he hoped to receive a reply “that in tyme we may make use of them.” Though we do not know whether Baillie’s entreaty did lead to Mure commenting on the Westminster Assembly’s revision, we cannot dismiss the possibility that he did and that the “travails” referred to in the 1647 Act had this task in mind.

Zachary Boyd certainly intervened in the work at Westminster during this period, but with far less support from Baillie. In a letter dated 26 January 1647, Baillie reported back on the slow progress of the psalter through the House of Lords and made critical reference to Boyd’s “fruitles designe” in agitating to have his psalter taken into account.<sup>21</sup> Boyd had been pushing for his metrical psalms and scriptural songs to be used in both England and Scotland for several years; indeed, a manuscript copy of Boyd’s scriptural versifications, known as *Zion’s Flowers*, now held at the British Library, may well have circulated as he sought to boost his reputation in London.<sup>22</sup> The General Assembly thanked Boyd in February 1647 “for his paines in his Paraphrase of the Psalmes, shewing that they have sent them to their Commissioners at London, to be considered and made use of there by these that ar upon the same work.”<sup>23</sup> He had also prepared new versifications of the scriptural songs (i.e. the Old and New Testament canticles) for use in Scotland, and these were being scrutinized in Perth, Angus, Lothian and perhaps presbyteries elsewhere too in Spring 1648, and it may be that Boyd’s subsequent labours were primarily dedicated to these canticles, which were printed in 1648 together with his metrical psalter.<sup>24</sup> Boyd had won support from

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>21</sup> Baillie, III, 3.

<sup>22</sup> British Library Harleian MSS 7518 and 7578, and Additional MS 34781; see Peter Auger, “Presbyterian Imitation Practices in Zachary Boyd’s *Nebuchadnezzars Fierie Furnace*,” *The Seventeenth Century*, 28 (2013): 207-19.

<sup>23</sup> *Records of the Commissions 1646-47*, 192.

<sup>24</sup> *Records of the Commissions 1646-47*, 450, 483 and 527; *The Songs of the Old and New Testament in Meeter* (Glasgow, 1648; Wing B3910).

some presbyteries, and in the summer of 1648, Baillie was to criticize intransigent Presbyterian elders “who had more regard than needed to Mr. Zacharie’s Psalter” and were holding up the process at the General Assembly.<sup>25</sup> Boyd’s later contribution, which the General Assembly recognized on 1 January 1650 (for both the “Psalmes and other Scripturall songs in meeter”), may have been intended to placate his supporters and perhaps gave him the opportunity to introduce lines from his psalter directly into the new paraphrase.<sup>26</sup> Though Boyd’s public demeanour and ambitions were so dissimilar to Mure’s, the paraphrases which both writers produced in support of Scottish Presbyterianism were implicated in the effort to create a single Anglo-Scottish psalter.

All of this background affects how we read the reference to “the travels of Rowallen, Master Zachary Boyd, or of any other on that subject, but especially of our own Paraphrase” in the August 1647 Act. In naming Mure of Rowallan and Boyd together alongside the old Scottish Psalter of 1564, we can detect the Assembly’s implicit assertions that a native Scottish psalter tradition survived, and that the General Assembly wanted to continue the Westminster Assembly’s work using the model provided by two established Scottish poets already associated with the revision process. Mentioning both men showed that the General Assembly had a clear vision of why revisions were needed to create a new Scottish metrical psalter and how those changes could be made. The statement justifies the new revision while proposing some practical and aesthetic guidelines for the new paraphrase. It was important to state that local precedents existed, though the Act does not dictate that only those versions named should be used.

The revision process which began in August 1647 took almost three years to complete. A letter to Westminster in November 1647 mentions a new paraphrase “printed and published here to be considered and examined against the next Generall Assembly,” and in April a committee was invited to review the corrections to the paraphrase (still being referred to as “Rous’s Psalms” in the correspondence, despite the English revisions) which led to a commission being appointed shortly after to

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<sup>25</sup> Baillie, III, 60.

<sup>26</sup> *Records of the Commissions of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland holden in Edinburgh in the years 1648 and 1649*, ed. by Alexander F. Mitchell and James Christie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1896), 339.

complete the corrections.<sup>27</sup> Presbyteries received a printed copy of the provisional new psalter early in 1649, and returned corrections by June.<sup>28</sup> The General Assembly appointed a seven-man Commission to look at the revised psalter on 6 August 1649, and then read and reviewed the text between 20 and 23 November 1649, before appointing the psalter for public use and authorizing it “to be the only Paraphrase of the Psalmes of David to be sung in the Kirk of Scotland” from 1 May 1650: “And for vniformity in this parte of the worship of God, Doe seriously recomend to Presbyteries to cause make publik intimatioun of this Act, and take speciall care that the same be tymeously put to execution and duely observed.”<sup>29</sup>

The composition process offered opportunities for many different people to modify the text. The four men originally appointed to examine the Psalter brought a range of learned and theological expertise to the task: John Adamson (1576-1651?), who was assigned Psalms 1 to 40 was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, and subsequently Principal; Thomas Crawford, who took Psalms 41-80, was a Professor of Mathematics, and later Regent of Philosophy; Psalms 81-120 were the responsibility of John Row, a noted Hebrew scholar whose anti-royalist sympathies continued after the Restoration; and John Nevay, a minister and strict Covenanter, took Psalms 121 to 150, which Rorison observes are closer to the older Scottish psalter than the earlier psalms are in the 1650 text.<sup>30</sup> In addition, senior Presbyterians and members of the General Assembly were able to recommend amendments to the new Scottish text,

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<sup>27</sup> *Records of the Commissions 1646-47*, 335, 448, 459-60 and 514. I have been unable to locate any copies of these early printings of the revised psalter.

<sup>28</sup> *Records of the Commissions 1648-49*, 141, 183-84 and 295; “Act for examining the Paraphrase of the Psalmes and other Scripturall Songs,” *Acts of the General Assembly*, 194.

<sup>29</sup> “Reference to the Commission for Publick Affaires, for re-examining the Paraphrase of the Psalmes, and emitting the same for publicke use,” *Acts of the General Assembly*, 217; *Records of the Commissions 1648-49*, 302-3, 317-18, 321 and 328. See also Baillie, III, 97.

<sup>30</sup> See Rorison, *Scottish Metrical Psalter*, 158-63; Stuart Handley, “Adamson, John (1576–1651?),” in *ODNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/143>); T. F. Henderson, “Craufurd, Thomas (d. 1662),” rev. Stuart Handley, in *ODNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6652>); K. D. Holfelder, “Row, John (c.1598–1672),” in *ODNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24187>); and Vaughan T. Wells, ‘Nevay, John (c.1606–1671/2)’, in *ODNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19914>).

and may well have drawn on alternative paraphrases when doing so. Given all these complications, it is entirely probable that numerous individuals consulting numerous existing psalters each influenced the text of the Scottish Metrical Psalter directly, and that the final text's range of influences reflects this diversity.

The composition of the Scottish Psalter was transparently influenced by political factors: was it enough, as the Westminster Assembly claimed, for a psalter to "be found as neir the originall as any paraphrase in meeter can readily be, and much neerer then other works of that kynd, which is a good compensation to mak up the want of that poetical liberty and sweet pleasant running which some desire" (letter to the General Assembly, 16 February 1647), or should musicality and suitability for singing using the common tunes take precedence?<sup>31</sup> Without any working notes or draft copies to consult, much of the detail about how the psalter was actually composed will remain unknown. Investigating the particular influence of Mure, Boyd or anyone else involves negotiating a dauntingly complex array of verbal echoes within which it is often impossible to isolate attributions in individual lines. Yet evaluating the presence of each source which Rorison names is essential for establishing how the final printed text was prepared. The next section concentrates on the contribution of Mure of Rowallan's paraphrases in the Scottish Psalter's texture as a test case for discerning what more we might discover about the Scottish Psalter in its literary and political context. Did the team of revisers have copies of Mure's psalter available to them, and, if so, how did they use them?

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In the Scottish Text Society edition of Mure's works, William Tough argues that Mure's text left a heavy imprint on the finished psalter: "A comparison of the Received Version of the Psalms [i.e. 1650 text] with Mure's Psalter indicates very clearly the extent to which advantage was taken of the latter in these final revisions and corrections."<sup>32</sup> Yet Tough's impression is directly contradicted by Rorison's claim that Mure's influence is apparent in just one out of every two hundred lines of the

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<sup>31</sup> *Records of the Commissions 1646-47*, 210.

<sup>32</sup> *The Works of Sir William Mure of Rowallan*, ed. by William Tough (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1898), II, 300. All quotations from Mure of Rowallan's works are from this edition.

1650 Psalter. So low is this total that it is worth asking whether we have proof that Mure's Psalter was consulted at all.

A good test for Mure's possible influence using Rorison's data is to see whether the 49 lines attributed to Mure are also found in other psalters. If they are, then it might be unnecessary to think the revisers also consulted his version. There are just two occasions in which Rorison cites Mure alone as a parallel. Within an analysis that so often lists borrowings within individual lines only, the four-line correlation in Psalm 31 which Rorison records is particularly striking:

For, from thine eyes cutt off I am,  
I, in my hast, had say'd.  
My voyce yet heardst thou, when to thee,  
With cryes my moane I made. (Mure, *Psalmes*, Psalm 31:22)

For from thine eyes cut off I am,  
(I in my haste had said)  
My voice yet heardst thou, when to thee  
with cryes, my moan I made. (1650)<sup>33</sup>

The said/made rhyme here, if it was only available in Scots pronunciation, may explain the unique reading in these two texts. The second instance of Mure as sole analogue occurs in Psalm 36:

Thy mercie (Lord) is in the heavens;  
Thy treuth the clouds doth reach. (Mure, Psalm 36:5)

Thy mercy, Lord, is in the heaven;  
thy truth doth reach the clouds. (1650)<sup>34</sup>

On every other occasion, Mure's reading is similar or identical to another psalm version, whether because Mure's psalter has direct contact with another or by coincidence. Mure, the Westminster Version and the 1650 text share readings on ten occasions. In this example, the second line of Mure's reading is closer than Westminster's:

I wait for God, my soule doth wait,  
My hope is in his word. (Mure, Psalm 130:5)

I wait for God, my soul doth wait,  
I make his word my stay. (Westminster)

<sup>33</sup> *The Psalmes of David in Meeter* (Edinburgh, 1650; Wing B2441). Cf. Westminster Version: "For in my haste I said, I am | cut from before thine eye; | Yet of my pray'rs the voice thou heard'st | when I to thee did cry."

<sup>34</sup> Westminster Version: "In heaven's thy mercy, Lord, thy truth | to th' Clouds. Like mountains steep [...]."



I wait for God, my soul doth wait  
my hope is in His word. (1650)

In other cases, however, Westminster and 1650 are closer and Rorison's attribution appears to rest solely on Mure's surviving manuscripts having been created earlier than the Westminster version:

O praise the Lord, for hee is good;  
His mercie lasts for ay.  
For ever that his mercie lasts,  
Let Israell now say. (Mure, Psalm 118:1)

O praise the Lord, for he is good,  
his mercy lasteth ever.  
Let those that be of Israel say,  
his mercy faileth never. (Westminster)

O praise the Lord, for he is good:  
his mercy lasteth ever.  
Let those of Israel now say,  
his mercy faileth never. (1650)

The other occasions on which Mure and the Westminster Version agree (18:20, 22:25, 22:26, 23:5 [quoted above], 27:2, 30:5, 47:2, 130:5) give some sense of the complex webs of influence which unite these psalters. It is usually impossible to know whether Mure does exert influence at a particular moment, or merely discovered the same reading when composing his psalter in the same Presbyterian context as the 1650 text. As such, these examples cannot show that Mure contributed to either the Westminster or 1650 texts.

The three manuscripts containing Mure's psalter justify such scepticism while providing valuable insights into his paraphrase's genesis and likely circulation. Sarah Dunnigan has suggested that Mure's psalter was never intended for publication: she writes that "Mure's exploration of spiritual penitence and the self's relationship with God is magnified in his unpublished but extensive psalm translations, which may have been created for private devotion."<sup>35</sup> Indeed, we have no evidence that Mure's incomplete, and perhaps deliberately provisional, psalter was ever printed or intended for print, and only Baillie's remark hints that a "perfyte copy" may once have existed.<sup>36</sup> However, the three manuscripts themselves

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<sup>35</sup> S. M. Dunnigan, "Mure, Sir William, of Rowallan, baronet (1594–1657)," *ODNB* (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19562>).

<sup>36</sup> The only printing prior to Tough's edition is the inclusion of Psalms 15, 23 and 122 as "specimens of Sir William's version of the Psalms" in a nineteenth-century

suggest that Mure's psalter may well have been written with possible readers and contemporary political tensions in mind.

The earliest, most complete and also the messiest manuscript is University of Glasgow MS Euing 14, a volume of small 100 x 150 mm, often tattered, rectangular sheets with numerous pinned-in scraps of paper held in a stained vellum binding, which contains Psalms 1 to 50 and 101 to 140. The psalms are written in legible secretary script, with occasional sections written in a more stylized hand, but with many deletions, revisions, corrections, pastedowns and other working notes. Several psalms are crossed out, and, towards the end, several are uncorrected. It would seem unlikely that such a manuscript was intended for circulation, except that a note on the flyleaf in the same hand as the psalm paraphrases, presumably Mure's own, suggests otherwise:

It is not to be presumed that this version, in the first draught, hath attained the intendit perfection. Let the reader observe and comport with the escapes, till (the Lord furnishing greater measure of Light and better convenience of tyme) they be amendit. | July 12. 1639.

Throughout this "first draught" are repeated references to another book. Several of the psalms that are crossed out in this copy have accompanying notes such as "vide alterum libellum" (Psalm 11), "in altero libro" (Psalm 15) and "vide librum" (Psalm 22; see also Psalms 31, 46 and 50). All these psalms are found in the other two manuscripts, University of Glasgow, MS Euing 13 and University of Edinburgh MS Lai.III.453, as detailed in Table II, below.

In addition to these paraphrases, MS Euing 13 also contains transcriptions of Psalms 100-150, excluding Psalms 107 and 114, from MS Euing 14. Though MS Euing 13 contains more psalm versions and MS Lai.III.453 contains more corrections, MS Lai.III.453 and MS Euing 13 may well have been produced together. Aside from similar contents, the clearest evidence is found on the titlepages to both, which contain virtually identical text written in the same hand: "Some Psalmes | translated and presented | for a prooffe to publick | view whereby to discern | upon the whole being conformed to this essay || By || A well-willer to the work of | Reformation who makes humble offer of his weak endeavours." The language here suggests these second drafts are as

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edition of Mure's *Historie and Descent of the House of Rowallane* (1657; Glasgow, 1825).

provisional as the first: these renderings are a “proof” (i.e. trial), an “essay,” and only “weak endeavours.”

Psalm	MS Lai. III.453	MS Euing 13	MS Euing 14 note
1	✓	✓	
11	✓	✓	‘vide alterum libellum’
15	✓	✓	‘in altero libro’
18	✓	✓	
19	✓	✓	
22	✓	✓	‘vide librum’
23	✓	✓	
31	✓	✓	‘in altero libro’
32	✓	✓	
34	✓	✓	‘vide alterum librum’
37	✓	x	
38	✓	✓	
40	✓	x	
42	✓	✓	
45	✓	✓	‘in altero libro’
46	✓	✓	
50	✓	x	‘in libro altro petatur’
51	✓	x	

**Table II: Three Mure Psalter Manuscripts**

The self-description “well-willer to the work of | Reformation” recalls the topical bite found in Mure of Rowallan’s other poetry written in the 1630s and 1640s, verse which contradicts his reputation as a purely private or “metaphysical” poet.<sup>37</sup> His *True Crucifixe for True Catholikes* (1629) may, as Jamie Reid-Baxter has argued, respond to Francis Hamilton of Silvertonhill’s *King James his Encomium* (1626) in attacking the Catholic Church.<sup>38</sup> *The Joy of Tears* (1635) is a sonnet sequence that laments the state of the Scottish church; *Covnter-Bvff to Lysimachus Nicanor* (1640) is an indignant verse response to the parallel between the Scottish Covenanters and Jesuits drawn by John Maxwell, Bishop of

<sup>37</sup> R. D. S. Jack, “Scottish Sonneteers and Welsh Metaphysical: A Study of the Religious Poetry of Sir William Mure and Henry Vaughan,” *SSL*, 3 (1966): 240-47: <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol3/iss4/5/>.

<sup>38</sup> Jamie Reid-Baxter, “The Apocalyptic Muse of Francis Hamilton of Silvertonhill (c.1585-1645),” *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, 4 (2012): 1-36 (36-37): <http://www.northernrenaissance.org/the-apocalyptic-muse-of-francis-hamilton-of-silvertonhill/>.

Killala; *Caledons Complaint* (1641) decries the King's attempt to impose his authority on Scotland, while the later *Cry of Blood* (1650), addressed to Charles II, condemns the regicide and calls on Scots to rise up against the English parliament.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Mure's experience in song-making and lute-playing was particularly useful training for preparing a metrical paraphrase.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Mure had an illustrious precedent within his own family for preparing draft paraphrases of individual psalms for private circulation within the Scottish church: his uncle Alexander Montgomerie had probably "translated bot a few [psalms] for a prooffe, and offered his travells in that kynde to the kirk," possibly at Glasgow in 1581 or Perth in 1596 as an alternative to the distinctly unmusical official psalter adopted in 1564, though David Calderwood's testimony is unclear about whether Montgomerie worked within a larger group.<sup>41</sup> The example set by "matcheles Montgomery in his native tongue" (to quote Mure's poem "To the Must Hopeful and High-Born Prince Charles, Prince of Wales") may well have inspired Mure's attempt forty or so years later when the political moment was right.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *The Joy of Tears*, ed. by C. Davis, in *Miscellany Volume* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1933), 159-78; David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 255; R. D. S. Jack, "Sir William Mure and the Scottish Covenant," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 17 (1969): 1-14; *Works of William Mure*, II, 1-52 and 295-98.

<sup>40</sup> Helena M. Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry of the Court of Scotland under King James VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 207-14; Shire, "Sir William Mure: His Place in Literary History," *SSL*, 6 (1969): 258-60; <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol6/iss4/6/>; *Musica Britannica XV: Music of Scotland 1500-1700*, ed. by Kenneth Elliott and Shire (London: Stainer and Bell, 1957), xvii, 213 and 216. Mure's lute-book and set of part-books survive as University of Edinburgh MSS Lai.III.487 and 488.

<sup>41</sup> "Reasons against the Reception of King James's Metaphrase of the Psalms, 1631," in *Bannatyne Miscellany* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1827), I, 235-38, 243 (237-38); Roderick J. Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics, and Cultural Change in Jacobean Scotland* (Tempe, Ar.: Arizona State University, 2005), 285-86. On Montgomerie's psalm versifications, see also Jamie Reid-Baxter, "Montgomerie's Solsequium and *The Mindes Melodie*," in *Fresche Fontanis: Proceedings of the 13<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference on Mediaeval and Renaissance Scottish Language and Literature*, ed. by Janet Hadley Williams and J. Derrick McClure (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 363-77.

<sup>42</sup> *Works of William Mure*, I, 40 (l. 1). See also Spiller, "Poetry after the Union 1603-1660," 156-57.

Even if Mure's psalter only ever contained a set of drafts at varying stages of completion, it was probably written with Presbyterian readers in mind: 1639 was early enough to compose a metrical psalm translation as a contribution to the Covenanting cause, even if debates about psalm paraphrases were only just beginning. It is not surprising, then, that someone like Baillie, who may well have seen a copy of the "second draft," should have known about and sought to distribute his psalter more widely. However, the evidence that the revisers must have had access to a manuscript copy of Mure's psalms is slight. We have seen that the cases where Westminster and Mure agree cannot be taken as good evidence for Mure's presence in either the Westminster or 1650 texts. Nor does evidence from Mure's manuscripts reveal any tell-tale patterns for borrowing from particular manuscripts: similarities are not concentrated in the psalms transcribed into either Mure's first or second drafts (see Table II above). We can only speculate that the second draft circulated more widely than the first. Psalm 31's inclusion in all copies of Mure's manuscripts does reinforce the argument that his version of Psalm 31:22 was a source for the 1650 text, yet it is a unique, uncorroborated example. More often, the manuscript context weakens the case for direct influence, as the following example from Psalm 13, which only survives in Mure's scruffy book of first drafts, shows:

How long wilt thou forgett me Lord?  
 For evir shall it bee?  
 How long wilt thou withdraw thy face,  
 And hyd thyself from me?  
 How long take counsell in my soule  
 Shall I, whill daylie grow [...] (Mure, Psalms 13:1-2)

How long wilt thou forget me, Lord?  
 shall it for ever be?  
 And how long shall it be that thou  
 wilt hide thy face from me?  
 How long shall mine enemy be  
 above me lifted hye? (Westminster)

How long wilt thou forget me, Lord  
 shal it for ever be?  
 O how long shal it be, that thou  
 wilt hide thy face from me?  
 How long take counsel in my soul,  
 stil sad in heart, shal I? (1650)

Rorison correctly points to correlation with Mure in the first and fifth lines here. But reading across individual lines (as Rorison does not) we

find reasons to doubt Mure's influence. For instance, the cadences in both versions are different: the first line of Psalm 13:1 is end-stopped in Mure but not in 1650, and the rhythms at the beginning of Psalm 13:2 ("How long take") are also dissimilar. Such observations reduce still further the likelihood that the revisers were consulting the original or a descendent of Mure's first draft, compared to the much stronger possibility that the revisers were working from one of the many copies of the Westminster Version that had been sent to Scotland.

Many of the other lines which Rorison associates with Mure are similarly vulnerable to de-attribution. Most damaging is the widely applicable point that instances where many psalters offer the same reading may not be strong evidence of cross-fertilization but simply indicate that the same poetic solution that was both metrically and semantically felicitous presented itself to different writers. At Psalm 19:9, line 3 ("The judgements of the Lord are true"), Rorison cites Sternhold, Rous, the Westminster Version, Mure, Boyd, and James VI and I. While it is preferable to cite the later Westminster Version as the likely main source, the surrounding echoes do inform us about how different psalters coalesced over time. However, to observe such coalescence should not imply a teleological outlook on the vernacular psalm tradition in which each psalter improved upon the last, beginning in this case with Sternhold and Hopkins. From examples like these upon which many writers agree, we learn little about the contribution which an individual like Mure made to the composition of the Scottish Psalter, though they do help us build up a sense of the similarities in approach between earlier psalters and the 1650 text.

If we reject date of composition as a determining factor for identifying sources but instead prioritize the Westminster Version and give preference to repeated correlations as offering stronger evidence of direct influence than isolated instances, then Mure's voice becomes very difficult to detect within the echo chamber of the 1650 Psalter. The low overall line count for Mure in Rorison's table is not simply due to our only having paraphrases of two-thirds of the psalms: there are no patterns which indicate that copies of Mure's psalter similar to those which survive were consulted. In case after case, it is easy to argue for coincidence rather than sustained influence, to the point where only the two examples which I introduced first, from Psalms 31 and 36, survive. These two cases are plausibly unique borrowings from Mure's paraphrase which were introduced at some point in the process. These points might encourage us to amend Rorison's table (all the time relying on his

comparative analysis) and reduce Mure of Rowallan's 49 lines to a questionable six, just 0.06% of the text; it seems wiser, however, to conclude that the intertextual connections in the Scottish Psalter are just too complex to be tabulated.

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Rorison's comparative analysis made the case for the Scottish Psalter's Scottishness by showing that almost half of all lines in the Scottish Psalter differ from the Westminster Version and other early paraphrases. This article has argued that his work does not, however, provide good grounds for believing that Mure's paraphrase was a direct source, and that Rorison's other figures are also suspect. The few lines which Mure writes that are common with the Scottish Psalter may be evidence of influence, but are more significant in confirming that he was writing with similar priorities and methods to later Presbyterian revisers. Rorison's comparisons also help us see that contemporary Scottish psalters held more in common with each other than with other early modern psalm paraphrases such as the Bay Psalm Book. These textual correlations indicate that a shared attempt was being made to create a Scottish metrical psalter which matched the common tunes well. As Baillie recognized at the time, Mure provided a great model for what a complete Scottish Presbyterian psalter would sound like. When Mure's name appears in the 1647 Act it signalled that a new and distinctively Scottish psalter was needed to complete the work done at Westminster. His psalter was not an isolated effort in private devotional edification, but a valuable first effort in producing a paraphrase that Scottish Presbyterians would find preferable to the old Scottish and Westminster versions.

This case study of Mure's paraphrase has argued that a wider re-assessment of the Psalter's composition is urgently needed, one which evaluates how the committee of revisers prepared a text which was substantially different from the Westminster Version and, in particular, re-assesses what contribution Zachary Boyd's paraphrase may have made to the final text. Each of the other psalters which Rorison names, and perhaps others which he does not, deserves the same attention to determine their possible influence.<sup>43</sup> Did George Wither, for example, really provide the revisers with 52 lines? How considerable was the

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<sup>43</sup> Patrick speculated on the additional influences of George Sandys' *Paraphrase upon the Psalms* (1636) and Richard Brathwaite's *Psalmes of David* (1638); see *Four Centuries*, 102.

influence of the old Psalter, and is its influence particularly concentrated around the later psalms which Nevay worked on, as Rorison implies? Do the other revisers reveal individual traits reflected in the final text? More thorough inspection of Mure's manuscripts would offer many insights into his composition process and serve as a foundation for closer, sustained comparison with the Scottish Psalter and re-evaluation of Tough's remark about resemblances between Mure and the 1650 Psalter. The story of the Scottish Metrical Psalter is fiercely complicated, but it may not need to be quite as complicated as it seems. We have seen that Mure's psalter was significant in the revision process even when it was not a direct source. His paraphrase's sensitivity to ecclesiastical politics and congregational practice showed that Scotland did still need its own metrical paraphrase, and thus helped inspire the creation of the psalter which unified congregations in the centuries that followed.

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